

THE FTNIB

JOURNAL OF EXCELLENCE

GO OR BIG
GO HOMELESS

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the Best. CCD's
Journalism
Excellence
Award

MISCHIEVOUS
GRANDMA'S BOOK
SAVES EIGHTIES TEEN

NOT GONE, BUT
SOMEHOW FORGOTTEN

THE PURSUIT OF
ACCOMPLISHMENT

A VOICE FOR THE
VOICELESS

CCD'S HIDDEN GEM

I BELIEVE IN VINYL



Pg. 27



The Star, Community College of Denver's student run Journal of Excellence, incorporates visual and written media to provide a platform of expression available to all CCD students. We adhere to Associated Collegiate Press guidelines.

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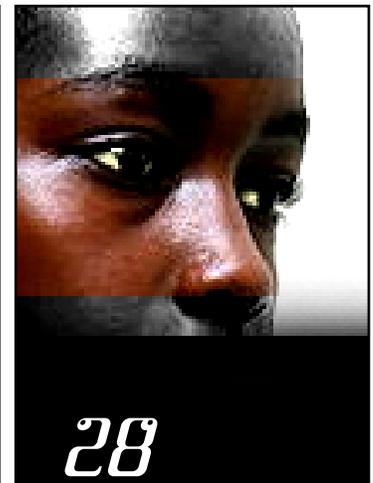
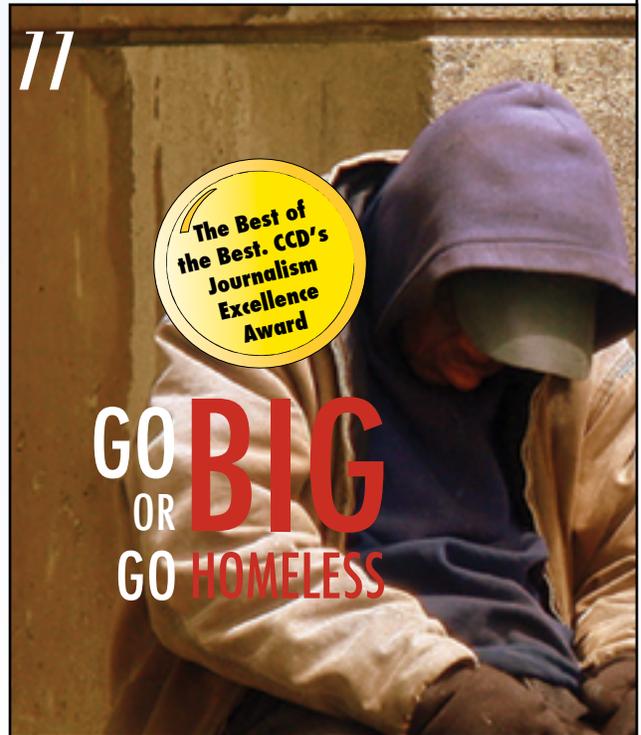


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After The Storm

Photo By: Ealasha Vaughner

I BELIEVE IN VINYL

NIKOLAS AIOUK

I walked into a high-priced, overly-hip, used furniture store. I was looking for a chair, but when I turned a corner towards the back of the store, an otherworldly spotlight from the heavens shown down on two shelves filled with old vinyl records. Jackpot. The records glowed with the promise of an amazing new find, and those two small shelves did not disappoint. The store cat had wandered up to me and started to purr. He stretched and rubbed on my legs while I began the process of meticulously flipping through every record on those shelves. But I could not be distracted. My girlfriend told me about a chair she liked, and the best response I could muster was an uninterested grunt while I checked every single record for scratches. Whoever filled those shelves with records knew what they were doing. Every album was in pristine condition, even though some of the albums were twice my age. That day I found some of my favorite albums, first pressings of the Beatles, Paul Simon and Frank Sinatra.

I believe that good quality vinyl, on a turntable with a good needle and hooked up to good speakers, is the highest quality

sound you can find. I rushed home to my lime-green turntable. I placed my new Paul Simon album on it and dropped the needle. I heard that initial pop of the record hitting the vinyl, which still makes my heart skip a beat every time. My room filled with a sound so full that I could hear things I had never noticed when listening with my mp3 player. The ridges of the wire wrapped around the thick strings of the guitar, the tiny nuances in Paul Simon's voice quivering with sadness or anger, even entire words I had never truly understood were now crystal clear.

I believe in "digging". Digging is the hunt for good vinyl. It's more often reserved for DJs searching for that perfect sample but can be enjoyed by anyone with access to a turntable. Everyone who collects



vinyl has a list of albums they want to find, and when I discover one of those albums in a stack of records, it brings me an unrivaled feeling of excitement, completion, and resolution. Some albums on my list are more important to me than finding a soul mate, and listening to them is going to be better than sex. I believe in the process of opening new vinyl. Like a lover undressing, unwrapping the cellophane covering a new record reveals the beauty within. Most records are black, but sometimes I crack open a new album and find surprising colors. I have vinyl that is red, yellow, pink and white, and I have a few albums with pictures printed on the vinyl. Even if I don't get a surprising new color, just studying the album art blown up to 12" by 12" or exploring the pull out sheet and reading the lyrics while listening to my new album is an almost religious experience for me.

I believe good vinyl can bring people together. Creating a playlist on an mp3 player is as simple as click and drag, but sitting down with someone and pulling out a stack of vinyl to listen to is a much more rewarding experience. I get to talk with others about their musical tastes, pull out vinyl

I know they will love and vinyl they've never heard before that they probably will love. Watching someone's face light up and that uncontrollable smile they get when they hear something they like means I've done my job. When I have people over, I like to turn off the TV and just play good music on vinyl in the background. Vinyl sparks conversation where there would be silence as we stare

I believe that good music can improve anyone's day, and taking the time to listen to music on vinyl is one of the best things you can do for your ears. I believe in vinyl.

**I BELIEVE IN
VINYL.**



“Some albums on my list are more important to me than finding a soul mate, and listening to them is going to be better than sex”

Antigua Guatemala

By: Will Epstein





CCD's Hidden Gem

By Chanel Ward

Students often say that The Community College of Denver is a different experience from that of any other community college or university. It's more personable; professors are able to assist students individually, and smaller classrooms create a family-like environment.

Students begin as strangers who become peers, but by the end of each semester, many students feel comfortable with each other, building lasting relationships with other students and faculty. There are many similar but untold stories of student experiences at CCD, like Ruby Lau, a student who inspires all she meets.

Ruby isn't a typical student; however, she's found a home at CCD. She is a grandmother of five who started her college career in hopes of helping those less fortunate. Ruby considers herself fortuitous and desires to spread her goodwill throughout her college experience.

Ruby's journey wasn't easy; she divorced young, forcing her to focus on raising a family and unintentionally neglecting her educational aspirations. But through her struggle shined a bright light! With the professors who helped her, the students who inspired her, and family who encouraged her, Ruby refused to give up, regardless of the challenges she faced.

Each semester Ruby ran into obstacles, mainly registering for classes that seemed too advanced. But after a couple hard semesters and a few dropped classes, she's on a successful path now, but she admits that she

would like to finish a semester without tears.

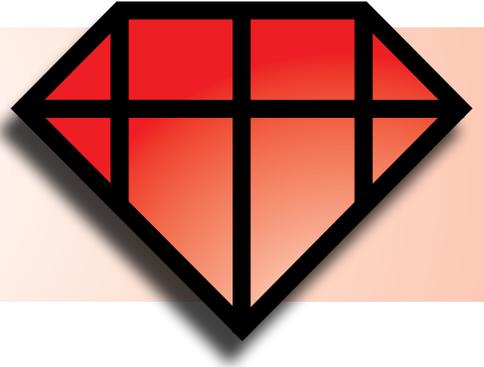
"Crying my way through college" is how Ruby explained her start at CCD. Her positive attitude and high hopes for success led her in the right direction, but this didn't come easy. Ruby had to face closed doors before any would open. But luckily she stuck it out and got a break when she met several professors who would help shape her college career.

Two of Ruby's English professors, Brian Dickson and John O'Leary, worked with Ruby and encouraged her writing. Ruby described her literature and composition reading classes as an integrated study that combined literature with the basic tools for writing essays, offering students individualized help.

"We became a family in that room," said Ruby, in reference to the two class-length sessions that she signed up for that semester. The class eased Ruby's anxieties, and her goal to graduate didn't seem so far away. It also showed that she wasn't alone, and that there were other students who were struggling.

"What keeps me remembering her is her humor, her caring attitude towards other classmates, and the enjoyable conversations we have," Dickson said--remembering Ruby and the lasting impression she left on him and his students. They left the same effect on her.

"I notice that she was a leader in that she could not only express her own voice in the class, but she was willing to reach out and help other students," said O'Leary.



Already, Ruby is using what she learned to help her peers; something she'll use when she finishes her degree in human services. Ruby's helpful nature reaches outside of the classroom with her volunteer work with Metro Care Ring; Denver's largest hunger-relief program. "I fell in love with helping people" she said.

"She deserves much acclaim for all she has accomplished. She's earned it, and she helped others along the way" said O'Leary.

Ruby has also left an impression on Professor Wade Fox, who teaches composition and rhetoric. "She ended up being one of my best students," said Fox. "She was always very generous and repeatedly helped other students, reading over their essays and explaining difficult concepts to them."

Now that Ruby has found her voice and confidence, she uses those attributes to help others find theirs.

This semester, Ruby stated she is maintaining an A average. But she is still feeling the anxieties of academic probation lingering above her. If she doesn't pass with a C or higher, she will lose her financial aid, but she still won't give up. This is just another obstacle that Ruby has to overcome.

Ruby's tears are becoming that of joy, and thanks to Vivian, Ruby's sister, she can receive her degree with the people she loves rooting her on.

Ruby's story is inspirational. Many students can relate to her and her struggles. We are all in a pursuit for something new, and CCD offers that comfortable, family-like support that is necessary to succeed.

"Learning is a messy process; it is not linear" said Dickson. Then he added, "Remember the people who are here to support you on your journey. YOU are not alone."





GO **BIG** OR GO HOMELESS

BY KELLY KRACKE



On any other day, the sounds of fleeting conversation, cars driving to and fro, and water roaring up from the gutters would be drowned out by the likes of Eminem or 311. Today, I have no choice but to bask in the sounds of the city. Denver, Queen City of the plains, I've known her for many a year, through multiple stages of life. I've seen her through eyes of sorrow and elation, complete achievement and utter despair, through sobriety and states that I care not to discuss. But today we get reacquainted through eyes that are foreign to me. It's remarkable really, how much one can miss with a pair of headphones constantly blaring.

I'm watching the incessant rain putting quite the damper on my afternoon. Although, instead of watching through a coffee shop window like usual, I've taken shelter underneath an awning outside an apartment building on 15th and Wynkoop. Hopefully conditions get better with the coming hours, or else tonight might be a little more trying than I suspected. Sleeping with a wet blanket is one thing I'd rather do without. About thirty minutes later, the rain slightly lets up. Since I haven't eaten yet, 16th Street seems like the most obvious place to go. As luck would have it though, I'm on 16th for no more than a minute when the wind and the rain rear their ugly head again. I

take cover underneath the northeast corner of a brick building; there's a small brick planter housing three dead plants. I take a seat, light a cigarette, and wonder how good of an idea this really was.

While keeping dry on 16th and Larimer, a most serendipitous of meetings occurred. Two seemingly homeless men - one can only assume - joined me beneath the cover. Recognizing my attire, pack, and bed roll, they asked how business was going today; I told them I haven't eaten yet. They collectively nodded their heads in a knowing manner. The two men inquired how long I'd been at it, at which point, I made them privy to my profile paper and my attempted immersion into the homeless culture. They seemed to be thoroughly amused by this gesture and took me under their wing at once.

Smiley and Red had almost a storybook dynamic to them. Smiley, a younger fellow around my age, was tall with short brown hair. He was sporting a green Ireland shirt draped over a black polo shirt. His frayed jeans and dirty feet didn't deceive his status as a homeless person. Smiley's defining attribute though, was a cute little dog perched along his shoulders. His name was Spot, but the majority of the time they call him Oodog. Contrary to most homeless people I come in contact with, his eyes still had a glimmer

of youth in them. He was very laid back and at ease about everything. Red was obviously the older of the two, having turned thirty-two not too long before we met. There were about seven or eight dreads, collected in a hair tie, limply standing up on top of his head. His huge graying beard and raspy voice unmistakably fit into my stereotypes of a homeless person. He wore a faded green t-shirt and khaki cargo shorts, great for carrying all the miscellaneous items. His most notable accessory was a hemp necklace with a blown glass bead and a wire wrap connected to the end of it. He was the more boisterous of the two, not wasting a second to introduce me to the ways of the homeless.

They imparted to me the unwritten law of the streets. Red told me that being positive is essential to being homeless. There's no point in being sad and homeless; at that point you really have nothing. Compared to Smiley, he was also considerably more spiritual. He was acutely in touch with various vibrations and energies, like a spiritual approach to being aware of your surroundings. "What you put out into the Universe you will get in turn," is the mantra Red swears by. He's convinced that the Universe will provide exactly what's needed.

Indeed, after fifteen minutes of spanging, otherwise known as panhandling, we were given a to-go box of delicious pizza. Knowing I hadn't eaten all day, Smiley and Red insisted I indulge in the fruits of our labor. The inaugural meal from a stranger's to-go box was four slices of spinach and fresh mozzarella pizza. According to my trainers, there is a right way and a wrong way to spange. Red first asked me what kind of sign I'm flying. I came prepared with four different cardboard signs, each donning a humorous message. During my interviews on Wednesday, I found out that humor sells far better than sympathy, and so far that certainly seems to be the case. I'm flying a sign that reads, "Too ugly to prostitute, too honest to steal – anything helps," and it seems to be a pretty good hit. A Hispanic family even stopped to take a picture with me. Afterwards they tipped me a dollar, which Red informs me, is one of the unwritten rules.

The two of them would also perform a "Hippie Road Block," where they would jump in front of an unsuspecting person and exclaim, "Joke, toke, or smoke!"

Over the course of a couple hours, Smiley, Red, and I are having what I would normally call a blast. Smiley didn't garner that nickname in vain. Next to surviving, putting a smile on people's faces makes his day. Throughout the afternoon, Smiley has been testing and retesting the gullibility of passersby by letting them know, "You dropped your smile!" It's astounding the fun one can have just watching the reactions to this comment; most everyone gives Smiley exactly what he's aiming for. The two of them would also perform a "Hippie Road Block," where they would jump in front of an unsuspecting person and exclaim, "Joke, toke, or smoke!" This prompting the individual to either tell a joke, smoke a bowl, or bum a cigarette. Most people were caught off guard and didn't take to the invitation as well as one would hope. I'm dumbfounded at the amount of charisma Smiley and Red put forth, given their current circumstances.

I'm flying a sign that reads, "Too ugly to prostitute, too honest to steal – anything helps," and it seems to be a pretty good hit. A Hispanic family even stopped to take a picture with me.

It's around six o'clock in the afternoon, but I can't be sure. I have no means to tell time. While Smiley and Red went to run an errand, I volunteered to stay and hold down the fort. It was during this isolation that my greatest challenge thus far made itself all too apparent. As I was flying my sign, I noticed the lack of eye contact I was making. I would keep my head low or emptily gaze down the street. There's a mild sense of shame, making me inept to seeing myself as an equal to the crowds passing by. When my companions were right here, rooting me on in a way, I had almost forgotten that I'm homeless, jobless, and doing nothing besides trying to survive. Like the rain earlier, it all came flooding back to me. It was miserable thinking that my contemporaries were flossing past me, thinking about how much of a low life I am, or the older folks not believing how a young buck like me could be wasting his life being a lazy bum. Or the most terrible part, watching all the beautiful women promenading down the mall, not having any suspicion whatsoever as to what a wonderful catch they just strolled by. For the first time in a long time, I was eager to not be by myself.

The few times I managed to make eye contact, most

were quick to veer away, but there were those few that gave me a genuine and reassuring smile, sometimes even a “How’s it goin’?” There’s never been a time when I was more grateful for something so simple. Ironically, I made the most money throughout my whole venture during my hour all alone. And every small donation I was given made me quiver in the wake of my heightened gratitude. Considering that these people are unaware of my guise, they are providing me with the bare essentials to survive. It’s amazing the readiness anyone has to make sure that happens. By the end of our spanging, we had collected \$17, 8 slices of pizza, half a burger, half a sandwich, some pasta, and 4 cigarettes. My comrades and I actually have a surplus for today.

Daylight slowly drifts away, signaling the imminent trek to our sleeping quarters. As we’re walking, I’m totally under the impression that our destination is a bridge of some sort. But after a mile of sauntering, we come to a stop, and I’m awfully disappointed. We set up camp alongside a building whose southeast corner is home to The British Bulldog, a dive bar on 21st and Stout. Writing this paper under yellow streetlight at one in the morning gives me a Jack Kerouac sensation. It almost feels surreal. I’m running out of cigarettes, the only companion I brought with me on this endeavor. Looking at Smiley and Red in their slumbers, I’m trying to convince myself that sleeping on the sidewalk in Five Points will not yield a negative consequence. But if I want any rest for work tomorrow, I have to “stop talking about it and be about it” as Smiley and Red would say.

Waiting for the first kick-down, or donation, is always the most grueling. The three of us rotated sign flying duty for about forty-five minutes when our first blessing came in the form of three sack lunches...

My attempt to sleep was nearly in vain, bouncing between utter paranoia and a half decent daze. I didn’t

think I would’ve had so much trouble falling asleep out here, but with it being Friday night, the drunks were out, and the cars were absolutely non-stop; not to mention, the light blanket I brought was barely sufficient for the early morning cold. Luckily, Smiley found me a good sized piece of cardboard to put between myself and the unforgiving concrete. Red explained that cement is infamous for drawing all the warmth from one’s body, hence the ever so popular, bum sleeping on cardboard stereotype.

Dawn has just broken over the horizon, and it’s time to get back on the grind. After packing up all the sleeping arrangements, our first stop is 7-11 for a nice hot twenty-four ounce cup of java. Once we enjoy our morning cigarette and warm our bellies with some gratifying pumpkin spice latte, we make our way to 14th and Speer to begin the morning spanging. Waiting for the first kick-down, or donation, is always the most grueling. The three of us rotated sign flying duty for about forty-five minutes when our first blessing came in the form of three sack lunches, each containing a sandwich and peanut butter crackers. It was only nine in the morning, and we already had breakfast. Eventually, I got pretty efficient at playing human Frogger while grabbing kick-downs from people’s cars on Speer. Shortly thereafter, our cigarettes and money were replenished, not to mention, some lovely people also donated a bag of dog food for Spot. It seems the Universe intends to supply all our needs this morning.

It’s finally about time I hit the road back to my house, my shower, my headphones, back to my button down shirts and clean shoes, and most importantly, back to my natural gait, back to exuding my overwhelming wealth of confidence. But currently we’re taking a mid-day rest on the lawn of the capitol, people watching as the masses make their way to The Taste of Colorado. After some reflection, the irony of panhandling right outside the annual festival is not lost on me. It’s quite fitting that in the years gone by I’ve tasted Colorado in my most lucid hours and darkest days, whilst being entirely grounded and completely helpless. I’ve tasted its succulent opportunities and acrid adversity. Indeed, now I have a new taste of Colorado, with a home and without one.



By: Mandi Stevens

PHOTO ESSAY:



aSpire



Bamboo Sun.

Tivoli Denver



as I checked the rear and side-view mirrors.

“Perhaps if you took those ugly goggles off of your face, you could see through your mirrors more clearly,” Johnny remarked, cracking up at his comment. I glared at him, slowly removing the lovely beauties from my eyes. But I had to admit, he was right. I could hardly see a thing through the mirrors until I had taken them off.

I inserted the key into the car’s ignition and turned it, starting the engine. I couldn’t believe it: I was sitting in a car, but this time, unlike every other time, I was seated in the driver’s seat. I lifted my foot slowly off of the brake pedal as I pressed down the hand brake and put the car in the driving gear, counting down in my head, like the pilot astronaut of a space shuttle about to take off. I gradually pressed my foot down on the gas pedal, carefully controlling the steering wheel as I turned the car away from the curb at the side of the road where it was parked. I slowly progressed toward a traffic light nearby. Well aware of my inexperience, and overly protective of his car, Johnny wisely chose a quiet, secluded parking lot about ten minutes away from his house. However, I just had to get past the traffic light to get there.

Gradually approaching the somewhat busy intersection, I clasped the steering wheel steadily with sweaty hands as I began pressing lightly on the brake pedal. I managed to give my turning signal, yet didn’t fail to make the mistake of giving the wrong one, turning right when apparently my turning signal indicated that I wanted to turn left. I was bewildered when the driver of the car behind me ferociously honked her horn at me. “What on earth?” I glanced over my shoulder after turning only to see her shaking her fist at me through her window as she drove by. Johnny chuckled. “You gave the wrong turn signal, little missy.”

Realizing my blunder, I quickly turned off the signal. “Well, thanks, smart aleck, for not telling me sooner,” I retorted. “Idiot,” I murmured under my breath.

Johnny glanced at me. “You’d better watch it young lady, or else this driving lesson will be over. It’s either my way, or the highway baby, and since you can’t drive on the highway, I think it’s my way then,” he said. He couldn’t help but crack up at his own

stupid joke. I rolled my eyes and continued driving, carefully focused on the quiet, bumpy road in front of me, leading to the secluded lot.

“Stop!” Johnny yelled. Bewildered, I immediately stepped on the brakes. “What?!” I yelled back at him.

He pointed to a small moving thing that had just brushed its way in front of the car. “Didn’t you see that squirrel?” Johnny smirked.

“Are you crazy?! We could’ve gotten into an accident or something!” I glared at him so coldly that he would’ve been frozen if looks could freeze.

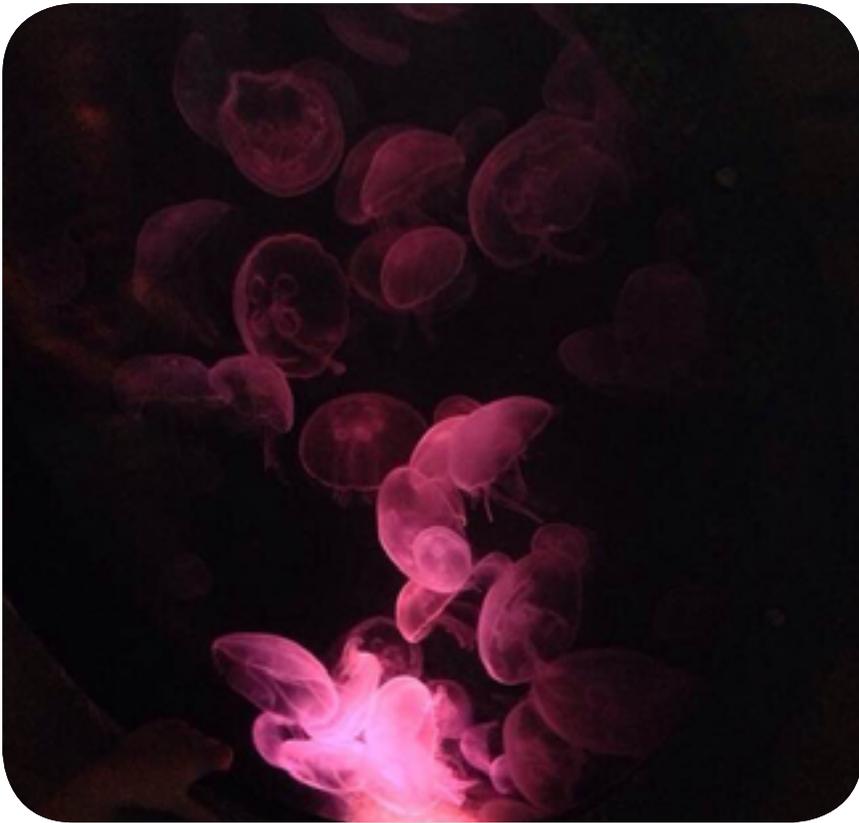
“Are you crazy? Were you actually going to kill an innocent squirrel? Besides, there are no other cars around now, so how could we have gotten into an accident?” Johnny chuckled, nudging me once again on the shoulder.

Ridiculous, I thought as I shook my head, fidgeting in the seat from the discomfort caused by my slightly wet pants. The mixture of over-excitement, surprise and fear certainly had a great impact on me, causing a slight trickle of pee as I continued driving. Will Johnny freak out when he realizes that I peed in his car? Oh well. I couldn’t help but smile at that last thought.

I finally got to the parking lot, bringing the car to a stop. I relished the moment of splendor in all its goodness. I had done it! I drove! Of course, there was still more work and practice to be done, but so far, so good! Even Johnny, who had mocked me the whole time, couldn’t help but admit that I had actually done a pretty good job driving! As I pulled the hand brake up and turned off the engine, I couldn’t help but flash Johnny another cocky grin, adding a wink this time. I took out the car key, and handed it to him. “She’s all yours again,” I said, reaching for my sunglasses. “And these beauties—mine!” We both laughed, Johnny reaching out his hand to pat me on the back as we got out of the car. I tried to hide the wet marks in the crotch of my pants, which eventually faded. However, there was one thing that did not fade: my excitement. I just could not wipe that smile off my face. I went through the rest of that day with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment, having lived out and achieved a dream that I had for so long wanted to make into a reality ●

Will Johnny freak out when he realizes that I peed in his car? Oh well. I couldn’t help but smile at that last thought.





Top

Pink Jelly

Photo By: Bill White

Bottom

Next, The Heavens

Photo By: Theresa Cole



Mischievous Grandma's Books Saves Eighties Teen

By: Colleen Hawkins

Nellie Mable Guthrie, my Grandmother, may very well have saved me from the eighties.

She wasn't someone commonly mistaken for a hero; rather, she led a quiet unassuming life in rural Kansas. She never drove, never even wore pants. I only ever saw her working at the church, puttering around the kitchen, or with her nose in a book. Although she was my Grandma, she wasn't even on my radar when I was fifteen years old in 1981. She was in the background of my life, a crippled little old lady I only spent time with in the summer or on holidays. She was old and I was young, therefore I didn't have time for her. I even considered her expired and beyond her purpose. She could barely get around and others always had to help her. I had no patience for this. One afternoon in the summer of 1981, she would teach me a thing, or three, that I, in my infinitely mature teenage wisdom, would never see coming.

It was a particularly hot and humid August, one of those afternoons when the radio announcer implores small children and old people to stay indoors, away from the health threatening heat and humidity outside. I would've liked to blame my behavior on this weather, but that would not be strictly true. We were in the living room of 511 E. Washington St., Norton, Kansas. There were no overhead lights on; it was too hot even for those, so we allowed the shadows to invite the coolness of shade indoors. I was pacing from the kitchen, through the dining room and into the living room, frustrated to be stuck in the house.

"Grandma, can I borrow your car?" I asked with fervent hope that she was as out of tune with my life as I was with hers.

"Oh Honey, I didn't know you got your license!" she twinkled merrily.

“Well, I still kind of have my permit, Grandma.” I replied.

“Well who is going with you?” she inquired.

“I am supposed to meet everyone out at the lake.” I said.

“Well Colleen, just as soon as you have your license you can drive out there by yourself, but until then we better wait.”

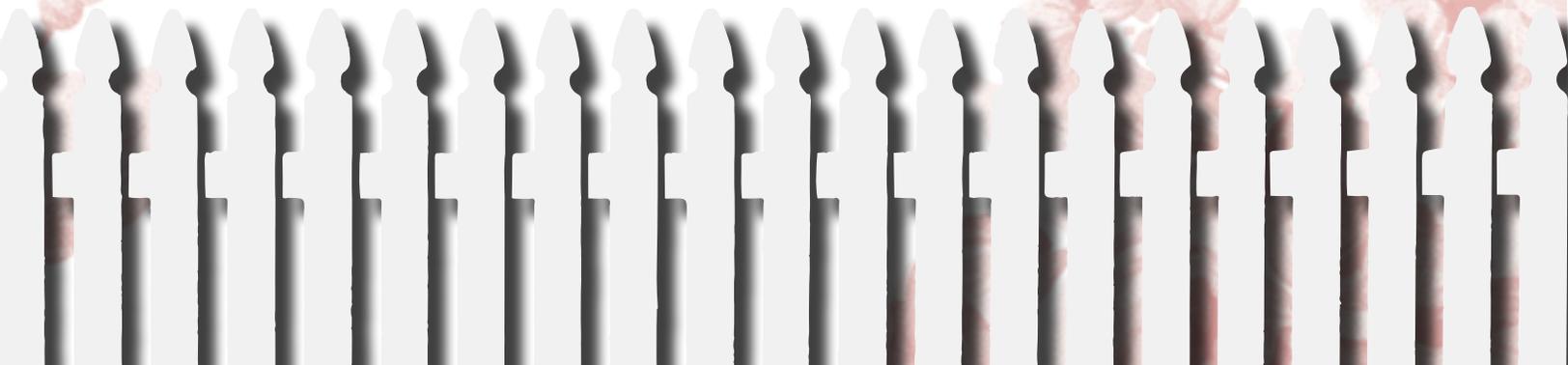
With this reply, all hope was lost. I couldn't walk all the way out there, it was five miles, and even I wouldn't risk that in that stupefying heat. Suddenly the room seemed sinister. The very flowers on the walls mocked my futile attempts of escape. That cute little farmhouse, with its lacy curtains and practical kitchen, was so out of touch: so completely uncool.

I was still pacing. “Grandma, please!” I begged. But alas, my Grandma compassionately but firmly refused. I was so focused on getting exactly where I wanted to be that I actually stomped my feet. Like someone half my age who desperately needs a nap, I stomped my feet. I looked at her and spouted fierce demands from my belligerent teenage lips. Why was it that what I wanted was not the least bit important? I was in a full-blown tantrum, thinking she would be glad to get rid of me if I behaved awfully enough.

In the midst of this intense exchange, I looked up at my Grandmother, trying to gauge how my little scheme was going. Her face was a mixture of perplexity and disappointment. She really could not believe what I was doing. This was not what I expected. I realized at that moment that I had never seen that look on her face. I had never seen her disappointed in me. This little woman, in her floral prints and with crippled feet, had never even been mad at me as far as I could remember. I thought back quickly, to all the times she had stood up for me. She would never believe

my cousins when they would try to tell her of some trouble I had caused. She packed a trip tote for me every time I went back to Denver, merely four hours away. She stocked my favorite cereal, for goodness sake, and I was brow beating her.

All at once, the shame of my little scheme rushed at me, and I, in turn, rushed right out of the room. I ran towards the back of the house, straight into the restroom, my favorite room in the house. It had a really cool claw-foot bathtub and an old pull chain



Without the filter of selfishness shrouding my vision, I started to see her differently.

flusher on the toilet. In the mirror I saw the same old me, but I didn't like her much. This girl whipped words on innocent grandmothers. Who was she? I didn't like her. The longer I looked in that old silvery mirror, the more I wanted my old ally: Grandma.

Suddenly she seemed so much safer than that stranger in the glass. I ran right back out there, hoping she would forgive me. Who knew? I had never gone up against her; I had no idea how she would react. As I came in for a landing in the living room, she was already sitting back in her rocker. When she saw me coming, she got up and opened her arms, knowing me ever so much better than I knew myself. I was crying into her cotton sundress, all thoughts of friends and the lake forgotten.

"There now, you're alright now, you must be over tired. Why don't we put our feet up for awhile and do a little reading?" This was typical Nellie Mable Guthrie. She always had a practical answer. She got us each some iced tea and settled back in her adorable little rocker. Her merry twinkle returned firmly back in those blue eyes; her reading lamp now shining.

I settled in my Grandfather's rocker and looked around. I noticed there were two stacks of books on the record cabinet, each over a foot tall. Grandma went to the library every week, too practical to spend good money on the amount of books it took to fuel her constant drive for reading. As I looked over at her, feet propped on her yellow flowered stool and her reading lamp shining over her shoulder, I realized how lucky I was. She even looked a little like Mrs. Claus, and she is my Grandmother. I sorted through her rather impressive collection of romance mysteries, picked one and settle in. Grandma was really good at picking stories, and before long, I even forgot where I was.

I didn't know how much time went by, but I heard her giggle. She laughed and laughed. She laughed from behind her little muffin belly, way down deep. She was laughing so hard that she shook her head, like she just couldn't get over how funny it was. My curiosity was

off the charts. I asked her "what is so funny?" When she caught her breath, she read a couple paragraphs out loud to me. I laughed too. There is nothing better than a plucky, amusing heroine in her world, I thought. We spent the rest of the afternoon alternately reading quietly to ourselves, and then reading the funny parts to one another. It was the best afternoon of my summer.

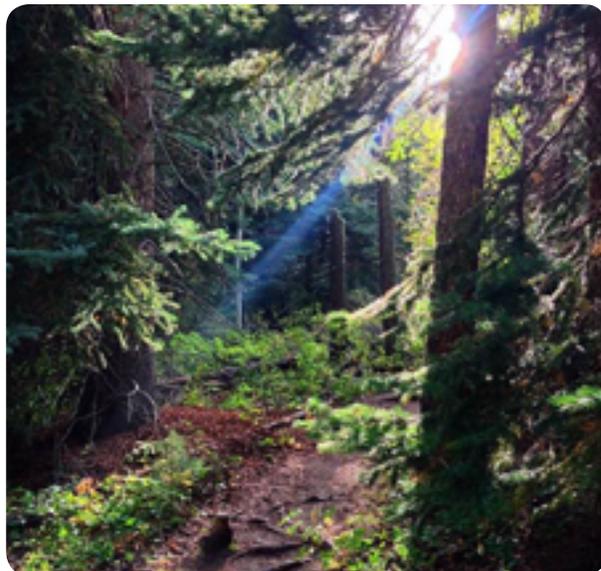
Without the filter of selfishness shrouding my vision, I started to see her differently. I felt like a different person when I was with her. I noticed things about her then, like how she watched the moon every night, or how she never missed the *Tonight Show*. Her crippled foot looked so painful, and she had a pronounced limp, yet I never heard her complain. I didn't even know what caused it. She managed to insert books into a place within me where there had previously only been partying. I remember all the stories she had told me and I am grateful I didn't push her away.

One of the most important lessons I learned from her in the summer of '81 was a very purposeful coping mechanism: reading and books are a means of escape available to every literate individual. Reading cures restlessness, and writing is good for your soul. These ideas very much tempered for me what became a forgotten decade for many of my friends.

My summer vacations changed quite a bit after that. It turned out my Grandmother had already read all the fiction in her small town library, that was how she knew all the good ones. She just kept rereading the ones she liked after the first run. She had her favorite authors, Barbara Cartland and Danielle Steele being two I remember. I started going to the library with her, and once I got my license, she let me drive her old Ford.

I feel a little sad when I remember how I once treated my Grandmother. I am also grateful I awakened from my misconceptions. That summer I discovered my Grandma's Mischievous Books, or my Mischievous Grandma's Books. I'm still not sure.

The Trek
by: Bill White





Not Gone, but Somehow Forgotten

By Erin Calkins

People don't pay much attention to them. We drive or walk by and shake our heads in disappointment. We sometimes even shout at them to get a job. Other times, we give them the loose change in our pockets or a whole bill if we're feeling especially generous. Most of us don't think much of the homeless. That is not the case for me.

I met Mark on the corner of Twenty-Second and Blake. I saw him holding his sign and displaying a friendly, hopeful demeanor. I parked in a nearby lot and awkwardly approached him. I offered him \$20, a meal, and a beer for an hour of his time. He seemed confused by my interest, but sheepishly agreed.

We decided to go to the Breckenridge Brewery, as it was right across the street, and Mark was happy to stay close to his preferred corner. The hostess didn't seem to notice anything out of place and politely seated us in a booth. There were tacky, baby blue puffball decorations hanging from the ceiling, surely what must have been leftover from a baby shower or other girly gathering. I couldn't imagine the interior designer would have thought they were appropriate for the dark, woodsy, earthy decor. The booth was comfortable; the seat wasn't too bouncy or too saggy. There were families seated around tables nearby, chatting and going about their Sunday as they usually would. The regulars were holding their posts at the bar, sipping their beers and mumbling at whatever game was on the television in front of them.

The restaurant was cold; someone decided that the warm, cozy sunshine outside warranted the need to make the inside feel like a walk-in freezer. What felt even colder was the demeanor of the waitress when she approached our table and became aware of the companion I'd chosen to dine with. He was dirty, ragged, and clearly homeless. As she asked what we'd like to drink, her eyes darted from mine to Mark's like a frightened rabbit scurrying in the street at the sight of an oncoming car. I assumed she was worried about whether or not I'd be covering his tab, so to ease her tension I invited Mark to order whatever beer he wanted. He decided on the stout, and I chose to have a mimosa.

I was surprised to learn Mark was fifty-six years old. I would have guessed mid to late forties, at most. His grey beard was trimmed, yet still slightly disheveled. His hair was tucked neatly under a black ball cap. His clothes weren't necessarily clean, but they weren't horribly dirty either. The dead giveaway was his sack that he had with

him. It was quite dirty and smelled of pavement and stale cigarettes. I asked him what he had in it, and he gave me the rundown: his sunglasses, smokes, lighter, reading glasses, wallet, clothes, Gatorade, a jacket, and snacks. I asked him where he would be sleeping for the night and where his sleeping gear was. In a hushed tone, he disclosed his sleeping area and stash spot as being a row of bushes near one of the Coors Field parking lots.

Mark was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico. He and his parents then moved to Seattle, Washington, where he grew up. Both of his parents worked for Boeing; his dad was an engineer, and his mother was a secretary. When he was ten-years-old, his parents divorced and his father left town, never to be seen nor heard from for twenty-five years. His mother had severe epilepsy, and he described her seizures as very frightening being the young boy that he was. Her seizures were so bad that she was no longer able to take care of him. At the young age of twelve, Mark was shoved into the foster care system. When he was sixteen, he left his foster home and embarked on his journey into the harsh adult world. He worked two jobs at two different Shell stations until he was eighteen. He then got his diploma and began his lifelong pattern of moving from place to place, never setting roots in any one place for too long.

The waitress returned with our drinks, and I took a deep, hearty gulp of my tart, crisp, bubbly mimosa. Mark's stout was deep, dark, and had a lovely layer of foam that reminded me of the cream of a fresh brewed shot of espresso. He sipped his brew like a gentleman, leaving me to feel like the slovenly one at the table. When the waitress asked us what we'd like to eat, Mark politely requested the house burger. I exclaimed "I'd like the chicken salad; I'm starving!" My face immediately burned red because of my insensitive remark. How could I say such a thing? Luckily, he didn't appear to notice, or if he did, was polite enough to not make a big deal of it.

Mark worked many jobs in his adult life. He was a fisherman, a mechanic, and a semi-truck driver, among other things. It was the job as a semi-truck driver where he made the unintentional transition from being employed to homeless.

Two years ago, he was driving from New York to Colorado with a load of Christmas candy. Hurricane Sandy was closing in on the East Coast, and he was trying to flee the scene before the evacuees clogged the highway systems.

He admitted to by passing his weigh stations and arrived in Denver on October 31, 2012, hours ahead of schedule. To celebrate Halloween, he decided to pop into the nearby hotel and have a few beers while his truck was being unloaded. He planned on returning to the warehouse to sleep in his cab until it was time to embark on his next hauling journey, but when he got to the warehouse, the security guard smelled alcohol on his breath and called his employer. He was fired on the spot. While admitting to being wrong and acknowledging that he shouldn't have had any alcohol, I could sense his bitterness toward the security guard who "ratted" him out. From that point on, he's been panhandling in Denver, or "flying the sign" as he called it. He makes about \$20 a day doing so and gets meals from some of the shelters around town, his favorite being Saint Frances. "Their food is actually pretty good!" he noted. He gets an occasional shower and change of clothes from the shelters as well.

At this point, the waitress had arrived with our meals. I was secretly delighted to see Mark pick the tomatoes off of his burger, as I dislike those red, slimy, seedy fruits as well. His burger looked delicious; it had a nice round toasted bun perched upon perfectly melted provolone cheese that wrapped the meat like a fitted sheet on a bed. I was envious of his delectable food choice, but nonetheless enjoyed my salad.

I asked him how it makes him feel when people tell him to get a job. When our eyes met, he didn't even have to answer; I could see the shame on his face. He expressed his embarrassment, stating that he's old, and he's trying. He has done some side jobs, but the arthritis in his cervical spine causes numbness in his forearms and fingers, making the easier to find but laborious jobs especially difficult.

I asked Mark how he feels society sees him, afraid that I would offend. Luckily, he was willing to answer my prodding question with sincerity. He is aware of how he

is seen, and described how painful it is when people give him dirty looks and the middle finger. He feels society has left him behind, ready to move on with the hustle and bustle of their day, and forgetting that a fellow human needs a helping hand. "I just want to be respectable again" he whispered. I restrained my burning need to cry, the tickle in my nose and watering of my eyes becoming almost apparent.

The waitress returned with the check, I paid, and began to wrap up our conversation. Mark expressed his appreciation for the meal, and I expressed my appreciation for his time and honesty. I walked back with him to his corner, and as soon as he got there, he started cleaning up the trash that had amazingly accumulated in the short time he was gone: a few cans, an empty pack of cigarettes, and a food wrapper of some sort. We thanked each other, shook hands, and I was on my way back to my car to head home to the suburbs.

On the way home, I felt a sadness pulling at my heart. There is one thing that we all have in common: we're human. We share the same hopes, dreams, and flaws. One of the things that separates us from the homeless is our ability to cope with bumps in the road. Lacking the skills to cope does not make someone less of a person. I was lucky to spend time with Mark, and at the end of the day, I'm thankful that I have made a new friend.

**There is one thing that we all have
in common: we're human.**

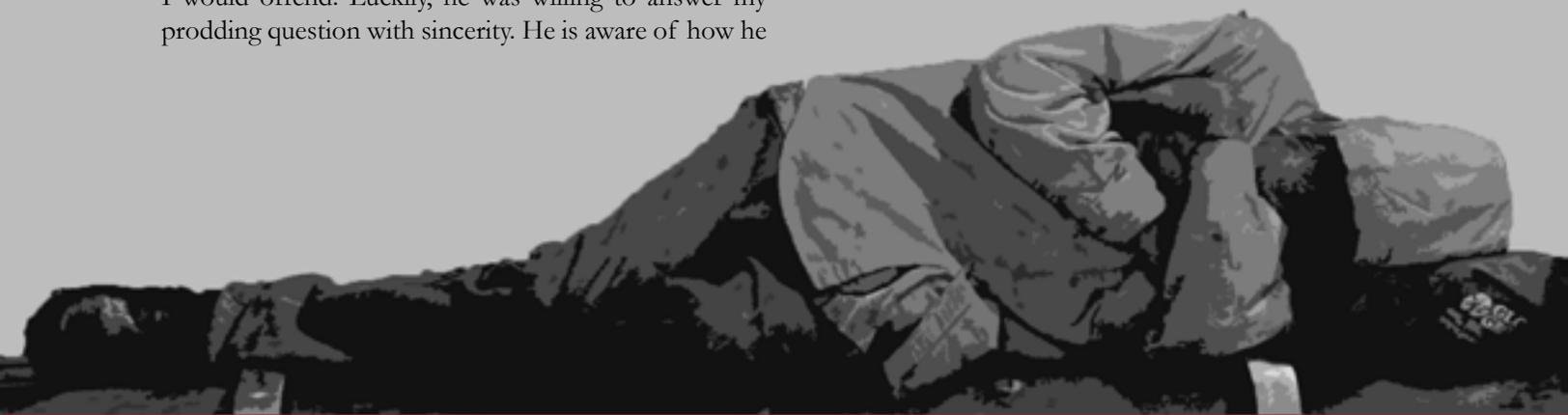




Photo By: Chanel Ward
Siamese Kitten smells his first flower



Photo By: Chanel Ward
A baby bee sits on a branch and sun bathes on a warm, fall afternoon.

Photo Gallery by: Aaron D. Graff



Top Left: *The Bull*

The 'Forcados', the third act in a traditional Portuguese Bull fight, attempt to corral the bull by hand.

Middle: *The Volcano*

Looking out of an ancient lava tube of Algar do Carvão, part of an active volcano on the island of Terceira, Portugal.

Bottom: *The Horse*

A horse grazes next to the Atlantic Ocean





a Voice for the VOICELESS

by Alana Odei

I have been a victim of indifference, of cruelty, of consuming lusts, burning passions, and insatiable desires. No mercies from a man I once thought was good. Or should I say ‘men’? Abusive words punched me in the face, and made me want to say “stick a fork through me”, and “I’m done”.

At the young, tender age of ten, what more could I do? What more could I do but just stand there and listen to him—watching him intently, allowing him to brutally rain insults on me, bad-mouth my parents, making me realize all the more how appreciative I was, and still am of them. I realized more and more how much I missed them. I vaguely remember how he used to leave my mother defenseless over the phone, drowned out in her tears, helplessly wanting to rescue her two little girls from this piteous state.

But did we have a choice? Did we have any other option? Our only other alternative was child services. And who on earth wanted to go there? Not us, never get to feel the loving warmth and touch of our parents again? No, not us.

The feeling of desperation—utter desperation and helplessness, not being able to do anything about your current state or situation—is a horrible feeling. Day after day, I woke up, got ready for school, and left the hell-hole that I was forced to call home for six whole months.

Day after day, I walked the bright and shiny halls of my middle school with a smile plastered on my face—a smile that hid all the lies, hurt and frustration that I was going through. Day after day, as I sat on the floor with my back against the wall, staring at the ceiling of what seemed the only solace available in that entire house—my bedroom—I knew I was reaching my boiling point. My little sister, who was too young to really understand all that we were going through at the time, always seemed to be a sort of comfort to me. As tears trickled their way down my cheeks, she sat beside me on the floor with one of her t-shirts, wiping my face dry. “Sissy, what’s wrong? Why are you so sad?” she’d always ask. In between short sobs, I’d reply, “You don’t understand. It’s just not fair! I want to get out of here!” After looking down at the damp t-shirt in her tiny hands, she’d say “Sissy, you can’t leave. I’ll miss you.” That last statement always caused me to burst into more tears, and I would reply “I know, Sissy, I know. I’m not going to leave you. We’re in this together.” All the while, muffled shouts and deafening screams echoed their way through the thin wall that separated my uncle and aunt’s room from ours. Constantly in a battle, my uncle and aunt fought all the time—physically and verbally. Loud thumps and then a sudden quiet, I knew she was on the floor. And I knew he had hit her. What ever happened to males

never laying hands on females, never hitting a woman, but rather defending her? Gender inequality happened.

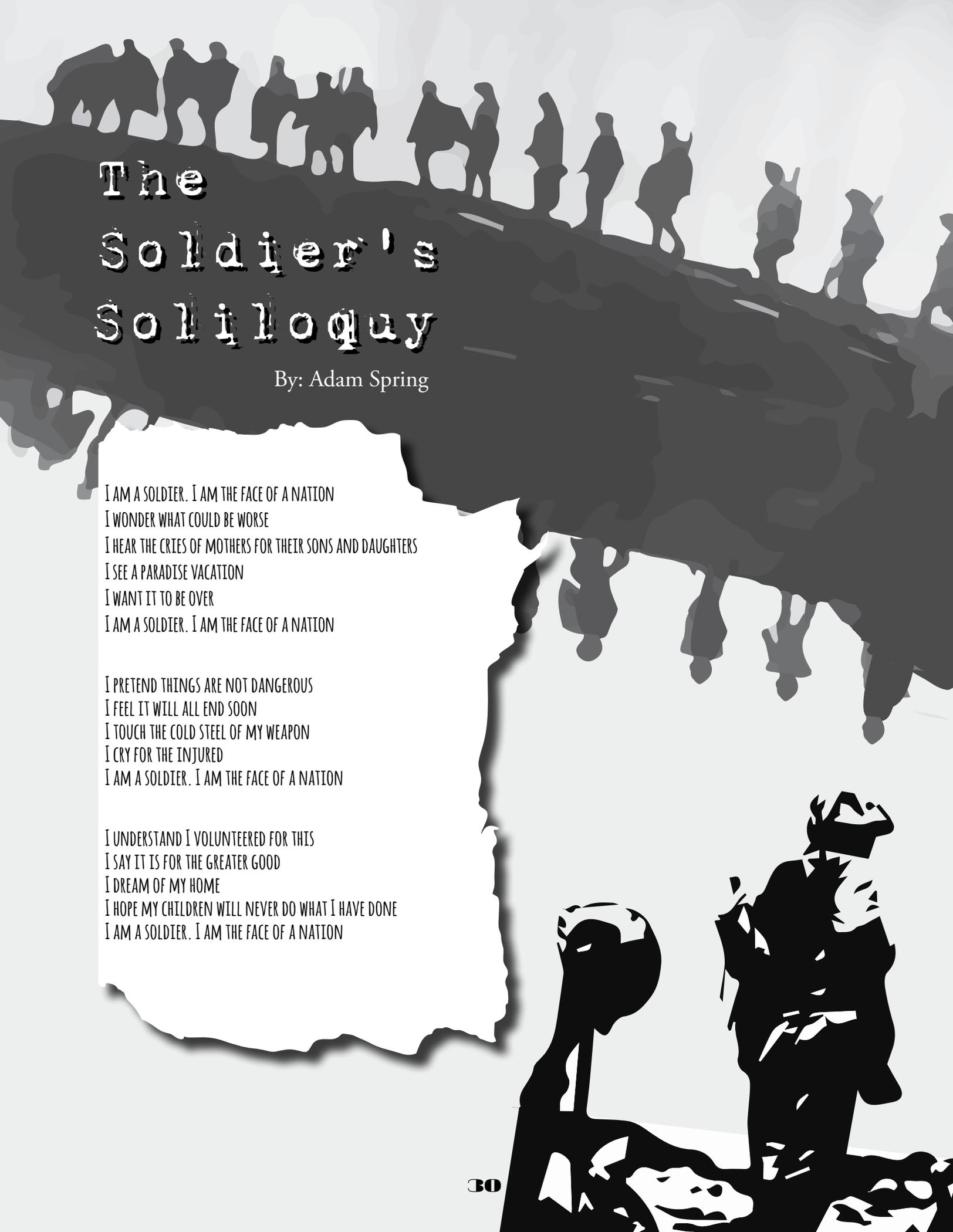
Gender inequality: The unequal treatment and perceptions of individuals based on their gender, and in our case—the female gender. Females are treated unequally in various aspects of society. Our voices have been drowned out into a mere whisper. They—*men*—have constantly fought to blot out femininity, our uniqueness as a creation. The gentleness, empathy and sensitivity of women have been overlooked or mistaken for sheer weakness.

It's baffling how some women remain in relationships that bring them nothing but sorrow, sleepless nights, and heartache. Black eye after black eye, busted lower lips, and disfigured faces aren't adequate signs to warn them of the danger they're in. Why would they continue to remain at the mercy of a *merciless* human being? For their children, at least that's what they always say, almost always. But is that right? It is the farthest thing from right. How many lies must they tell—and believe—to be satisfied? Apparently, they find it hard to grow tired of the lies formulated against them. They continue to pose as such gullible creatures, susceptible to more harm and danger from their male counterpart. He strikes you, recovers, and then on his knees, shedding crocodile tears, he continues to claim that it was a mistake, that it's different this time, that he won't do it again—pure lies and meaningless words, because on the verge of another argument, he'll relapse and do it again. Exactly what these women fail to realize is if he did it once, he'll definitely do it again. And again. And again. Until she finally realizes that something must be done. But, aren't there times when women *do* take action, but nothing is done? Oh, there are. A classic example is a guest who appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show. Yvette Cade, a *woman* with a voice to be heard, a voice that *needed* to be heard, but it wasn't until it was too late.

Constantly stalked and threatened by her ex-husband, she fought for a restraining order against him, for her daughter and herself. But what happened? The *male* judge on the case ignored her pleas to extend the protective order barring him from visiting them. As a result of that, eventually, the ex-husband doused her with gasoline, setting her on fire from head to toe. Suffering through severe third-degree burns and numerous surgeries, she's had to live with the hurt, pain, and the general misery this man caused her, all because her voice was not heard. She was refused a peace-of-mind that she so desperately needed for herself and for her daughter. Is it not because of fear of such a consequence that she continued on in this distressing and piteous state? Rather, a consequence such

as this could have been prevented if she had been granted the protective order. If her gentleness, empathy, and sensitivity had not been overlooked as sheer weakness or meekness, if she had been respected as a woman, as a co-equal, then this devastating turn of events could have been avoided completely. Our voices need to be heard. They *must* be heard. Our femininity—our uniqueness as a creation must be restored.

*Our voices have
been drowned
out in to a mere whisper*

The background of the page is a high-contrast, black and white illustration. At the top, a line of silhouettes shows soldiers standing on a ridge or trench edge, looking out over a landscape. Below this, the page is dominated by a large, dark, irregular shape that resembles a torn piece of paper or a shadow. Inside this dark area, the title and author's name are written in a white, serif font. At the bottom of the page, there are more silhouettes: one soldier in the foreground looking towards the left, and another soldier standing further back, looking towards the right. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

The Soldier's Soliloquy

By: Adam Spring

I AM A SOLDIER. I AM THE FACE OF A NATION
I WONDER WHAT COULD BE WORSE
I HEAR THE CRIES OF MOTHERS FOR THEIR SONS AND DAUGHTERS
I SEE A PARADISE VACATION
I WANT IT TO BE OVER
I AM A SOLDIER. I AM THE FACE OF A NATION

I PRETEND THINGS ARE NOT DANGEROUS
I FEEL IT WILL ALL END SOON
I TOUCH THE COLD STEEL OF MY WEAPON
I CRY FOR THE INJURED
I AM A SOLDIER. I AM THE FACE OF A NATION

I UNDERSTAND I VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS
I SAY IT IS FOR THE GREATER GOOD
I DREAM OF MY HOME
I HOPE MY CHILDREN WILL NEVER DO WHAT I HAVE DONE
I AM A SOLDIER. I AM THE FACE OF A NATION

by: Yevgeniya Arushanova



Trees



Waterfall

Gorgeous view





Fall

Photo By: Will Epstein
The Auraria campus during the Fall.